

Texas to serve his nation as an enlistee with the United States Marine Corps. In 1993, on leave from Marine boot camp training, he married his high school sweetheart, Jacki. As a Marine, Iron Bill served 4 years, including a deployment to Somalia with I Marine Expeditionary Force in support of Operation Restore Hope, 1995. He returned home to Texas and to Jacki to begin his career and to start a family. Twenty-one years later, Captain Dowling and Jacki have three children: Forrest, Faith and Foster.

Iron Bill's patriotic spirit and love of the community led him to join the Houston Fire Department. He graduated from the Houston Fire Department Academy in 2000 and steadily rose through the ranks. He worked at Stations 12, 19, and 48 before making Captain at Station 68 in January of 2013. Firehouse 68 is located at the corner of Bissonnet and South Gessner in the heart of Southwest Houston. In 2013, the fire apparatus of Firehouse 68 made 14,847 responses, making it the third busiest fire station in the City of Houston. There, at Firehouse 68, Captain Dowling became known as Iron Bill, a fitting nickname to describe a strong and courageous hero.

It was just five months after he arrived at Station 68 that Captain Dowling and fellow firefighters received an alarm call that would take them to the gates of hell.

On that fateful day, in the heat of the Texas noonday sun, Captain Dowling along with the four other firefighters rushed into the hotel to find potential trapped guests. While the firefighters were in the hotel, the roof collapsed, trapping and killing Garner and Sullivan from Station 68 and Bebee and Renaud from Station 51. Captain Dowling's legs were crushed and burned, but he remained calm, radioed for help and waited for his brothers to pull him from the flames.

The attending physician in the ambulance said that Captain Dowling, though severely injured, kept asking about the condition of his crew. He was more concerned for the safety of others than himself, the testament of a true hero. He told the doctor, on the way to the hospital, to tell his wife and children that he would fight for them. Hearing this comes as no surprise to Captain Dowling's family; they know him as a fighter.

Captain Dowling was seriously injured with burns over thirty percent of his body, and he was placed in a medically induced coma for months at Memorial Hermann Hospital and Medical Center. He subsequently had both legs amputated and suffered brain damage. A long road of recovery was ahead for Captain Dowling, but surrounded by a team of doctors, his family, firefighter family, friends, church and the entire city and state of Texas, Iron Bill was not alone. Deserving, Captain Dowling became everyone's hero.

Since returning home, Jacki left her full time job at Frank Elementary to care for her husband full time. It's no surprise that as a Texas woman, she's strong and determined, but quite simply, the strength that she possesses is amazing. To keep the community updated on Iron Bill, she started blogging on a community Facebook page entitled "Capt. William Dowling Iron Bill". This blog allows the community to rally behind the Dowling family, cry with them, laugh with them, pray for them and see their hero survive.

In August of 2016, the Dowling family moved to Durango, Colorado in order for Cap-

tain Dowling to make the most of his journey in the great outdoors. He became hooked on skiing through Adaptive Sports. Jacki said he was the healthiest he had been in a long time and was thriving in the mountain air so Jacki returned to coaching volleyball.

On the morning of March 7, 2017 Jacki asked for prayers for Iron Bill, as she was worried about his recent spell with pneumonia. That evening Captain William Dowling took his final journey home into the arms of the Good Lord.

Captain Dowling will be remembered for his bravery, determination, and loyalty. He always put others ahead of himself and was dedicated to serving his community. The legacy Iron Bill leaves behind is one that his friends, family, and community will never forget.

Today, the entire city of Houston will pay tribute to the life of one of Houston's heroes, one of our finest.

Houston firefighters are grateful for the support of 174 firefighters from 30 Texas departments that will ride in Houston stations tomorrow so A-shift firefighters can attend the memorial service for Iron Bill Dowling. Thanks to firefighters from College Station, Plano, Montgomery County, Conroe, Weatherford, Pearland, New Braunfels, South Montgomery County, Fort Worth, Sugar Land, China Grove, Kemah, West University, Longview, Nacogdoches, Bexar County ESD 2, Lewisville, Galveston, Lubbock, Baytown, Southlake, Benbrook, Seguin, Austin, Dallas, Westfield, Waco, Hutchins, Tomball, and The Woodlands.

As the family of Iron Bill mourns the loss of a great man, I hope they know the community of Tomball, the greater Houston area and Texas' Second District will keep the family in their thoughts and prayers. Our community will always be grateful for his service and sacrifices. Once a hero, always a hero. That's the man we call Iron Bill.

And that's just the way it is.

#### CELEBRATING MAPLE SEASON IN NEW YORK'S 21ST DISTRICT

**HON. ELISE M. STEFANIK**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 15, 2017*

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a time-honored tradition in New York's 21st district. Specialty crop products are a critical part of the North Country's economy, and maple holds a special and delicious place among them. Every year in late winter and early spring, the cultivation of maple tree sap gives residents a reason to celebrate.

New York State is home to the largest resource of tappable maple trees within the United States. Every year, our farms produce thousands of gallons of sap, which will then be made into syrup and other maple products. These products are not only a staple in households across the region, they also encourage tourism and support our small and local businesses.

The benefits of maple syrup production are a source of celebration for communities throughout the North Country. Throughout March, maple festivals are held across New York, with families and friends gathering to enjoy delicious products and attend tours of locally owned farms.

In our district, the Toad Hill Maple Farm has been producing high quality maple products for over 30 years. Utilizing more than 100 acres of land and currently standing as the largest maple producer in Warren County, the system used at Toad Hill can turn 1,000 gallons of sap into 25 gallons of syrup per hour.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand on the House floor today to support our North Country maple farmers.

#### IN RECOGNITION OF CYNTHIA WILBANKS' SERVICE AND ACTIV- ISM ON BEHALF OF THE SOUTH- EAST MICHIGAN COMMUNITY

**HON. DEBBIE DINGELL**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 15, 2017*

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Cynthia Wilbanks, the University of Michigan's Vice President for Government Relations, for receiving the United Way of Washtenaw County's 2017 Woman of the Year Award. Ms. Wilbanks has served Washtenaw County and southeast Michigan with distinction through her involvement in nonprofit and community organizations.

Cynthia Wilbanks has been an effective advocate and leader in southeast Michigan through her work at the University of Michigan and on behalf of the community. While serving as the University's Vice President of Government Relations, Ms. Wilbanks has championed initiatives to strengthen the University community and coordinate the University's policies and responses to federal, state and local legislation. In addition, Ms. Wilbanks serves on the boards of directors of numerous nonprofit organizations, including the Riverside Arts Center Foundation, Center for Michigan, and Ann Arbor SPARK, a startup and business incubator. She is also an active member of United Way and served as the University of Michigan United Way's Campaign Chair for four straight years.

Ms. Wilbanks has also distinguished herself through her outstanding record of public service. She has served on the staff of several U.S. Representatives, including working as Rep. Carl Pursell's district director from 1979 through 1992. During her time as a public servant, Ms. Wilbanks was a tireless advocate who fought for policies to benefit southeast Michigan and its residents. Her record of achievement has helped make Michigan a great place to live and work.

Ms. Wilbanks' leadership and hard work have been critical to the growth and success of the University of Michigan as well as the greater southeast Michigan community. As a result of her efforts, Ms. Wilbanks was named one of the 100 most influential women in Metro Detroit by Crain's Detroit Business in 2002 and has also received the Girl Scouts of the Huron Valley Council's Women of Distinction Award. These accolades, in addition to being named Woman of the Year, are a testament to Ms. Wilbanks' record of success and continued activism in the community. It is my hope that Ms. Wilbanks continues to build on these accomplishments in the coming years.